

NAVY AND MARINE CORPS COMMENDATION MEDAL

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Rising Performer Discovered Within Seabee Battalion



BU3 Rana Scanlon performs before hundreds of troops in Western Iraq. The talented artist sang her original compositions during an hour-long performance. artist and audience.

Al Asad, Iraq - Witnessing undiscovered musicians perform before they become famous is relatively rare. Artists often play limited venues consisting of a small fan base before the music industry discovers them.

Those days are waning for BU3 Class Rana Scanlon, Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 25. You wouldn't guess her hidden talents from watching her swing a hammer on Seabee construction projects during the day, but Scanlon is a musical powerhouse in more ways than one.

In addition to writing lyrics and creating her own compositions, she combines these talents with a professional sound all her own. She has astonishing vocal control and uses her stage presence to cut through the physical and emotional and barriers that exist between

Some have compared her finely tuned voice to Sarah McLachlan, but Scanlon's performance is certainly distinctive. Her singing style and original works are highly addictive; matched with her charismatic flair, the performer earns the devotion - the very heart and soul of audiences, everywhere.

So far, Scanlon has played strictly acoustic performances. "Right now I don't think I could sing solo with an electric guitar," said Scanlon. "It takes away from the voice because it's almost a voice of it's own. The acoustic guitar compliments my style better."

Like the early careers of other well-known musicians, she has played her share of small bars and coffee houses. Her most recent concert was a first for Scanlon in two ways. This was her first large concert in Iraq and it was also her first concert as the headline act.

This August, Scanlon played to hundreds of fans at a standing-room-only venue in Iraq. Most of the troops had already heard Scanlon perform before - but they came back for more. Service men and women are generally a pretty tough crowd to please. Scanlon's ability to consistently draw returning listeners is testament to her future success.

During the August 18 concert, Scanlon spoke with the audience about the inspiration behind many of her songs. She gave a mesmerizing performance during the hour-long concert and the audience begged for more. She could rock the house when she chose, but this compilation of songs mostly captured the audience on a deeper level.

As with the early works of most artists, many of Scanlon's songs deal with life and relationships. She said that she celebrates her love of life through her music. Her latest performance included a song she'd written only weeks earlier. Her song *Sand* is a commentary on the turbulence of war and it struck close to home for many of these troops.



U.S. Troops came to hear BU3 Scanlon perform this summer, but many in the crowded room had heard her perform before. Her ability to draw a return audience is an indication of her musical potential.

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The only song she didn't write during the set was a favorite from her mom's original compositions. Music ability may be partially hereditary, but Scanlon, at age 16, learned to play guitar right from her talented mother.

She ripped into the rocking blues-style song *Peach Tree* early in the set and repeated the popular song during the encore when heavily prompted by the audience.

Scanlon has a rare gift. She has no formal training in music and her career has led her on many paths. She holds a degree in Animal Science, but eventually she chose to follow her passion for art and earned a degree in Graphic Design and Illustration from Brown College.

Scanlon continues to pursue her passion for music and graphic arts. "I will never give up either one of them," said Scanlon. "One compliments the other. My passion and my love for everything I enjoy in life is what strikes an idea and this is how I express it."

Hundreds of troops in Iraq have already discovered the magic she possesses. It won't be long before Scanlon becomes a household name and the music of this vibrant musician is heard throughout the world. 🌐



BU3 Scanlon prepares a newly built door for the hinge installation. This Seabee, besides being a talented composer and performer, has a degree in graphic design and works full time as an artist.



BUC (SCW) Ward Cheney, reenlists on the quarterdeck at Al Asad. Cheney already has 17 years with the Seabees and his active duty years include a four-year period from 1969 to 1973 as a boiler technician in the Navy.



BUC (SCW) Ward Cheney receives congratulations upon his reenlistment from YN2 (SCW) Mary Francis of the NMCB-25 administrative department.

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NMCB-25 LETTER OF APPRECIATION

NMCB-25
LETTER OF
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CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION:

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USMC CERTIFICATE OF COMMENDATION



USMC LETTER OF APPRECIATION



During one of the more unusual reenlistment ceremonies in Iraq, UT2 (SCW) Scott Kallas reenlists with the help of LCDR Peter Muschinske.

Chiefs Begin Construction of a New Chief's Mess in Iraq



AL ASAD, Iraq – With shovels in hand, Navy chiefs from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), NMCB-18, 3rd Marine Air Wing, RCT7, CLB 1, Task Force Military Police held a ground breaking ceremony, 20 Sept., for a new chief petty officer (CPO) facility.

The base command, working with the NMCB-25 Operations department, were able to fund the building when they realized the importance and benefits of having a unified chief's mess in Al Asad.

The NMCB-25 chief's community worked long hours to lay the concrete foundation before their demobilization process

began that same week. Navy chiefs who remain in the area will be responsible for completing the project.

"By laying the groundwork for this facility we are really building the foundation for camaraderie and a good working relationship with other chiefs," said CMDCM (SCW/FMF) Brian Benzinger.

Benzinger said he felt it was important that chiefs from all commands work together, and that one way to accomplish that goal here in Al Asad is to build an area where Navy chiefs could meet. "One team, one fight," said Benzinger. "When you can get a group of Sailors that are willing to work alongside one another - individuals who normally have management positions - and conduct physical labor together, it creates a fellowship. Being able to work together as a team shows a sense of fulfillment among the chief's community."

As Command Master Chief, Benzinger has flown across Western Iraq with NMCB-25's commanding officer, CDR David Marasco, and they have seen what Seabees and Marines at large and small detachment sites are doing. "I wouldn't call this project unique," said Benzinger. "I think the same thing is happening in other areas of Iraq. It's just that this will be the first time this base will have a unified mess since troops arrived in 2003. These are standard on bases in the U.S."

The CPO mess (facility) will be open to all chiefs in the area and will help to bring the CPO community together. Chiefs will use the 24 by 40 foot building to assist Navy units transitioning on and off the base, conduct traditional CPO mess functions, and facilitate training.

The chief's community also aids area commands by supporting advanced education in the Marine Corp's Fleet Marine Force and Seabee Combat Warfare programs.



SWCM (SCW) Louis Hogan, CMDCM (SCW/FMF) Brian Benzinger, CMDCM (SCW) Paul Barton, HMCS (FMF) Terry Green, HMCS (SW/FMF) Chris Kutz, and HMC (FMF) Indira Kozak break ground on the new chief's mess in Al Asad.

NMCB-25 and NMCB-18 Complete Transfer of Authority Seabees begin returning home after deployment to Middle East

AL ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq –Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25), Fort McCoy, Wis., will depart areas of Iraq and Kuwait after completing a six-month deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. A transfer of authority ceremony, 22 Sept., marked the end of operations in Western Iraq for NMCB-25, and the start of tasking for NMCB-18, Fort Lewis, Washington.

“I am glad to be here today to see you,” said Commodore Robert Newman, Third Naval Construction Regiment, Marietta, Ga. “Glad to see NMCB-25 and its accomplishments, whether it was working on the runways, roadways of Iraq, or the convoy security element on the numerous missions that you took. God bless you. God bless you for your sacrifice and for what you’ve done and what it means for the people of Iraq.”

“When the call came out, you came,” said Newman. “You raised your hand and said I’ll go. You won’t forget the people that are not going back with you, and in their name you will carry on. You will carry on the torch in the name of those that have gone before us: Jaime Jaenke, Gary Rovinski, and Jerry Tharp. Let it be said

that when we leave this place, that we stood up to danger, we stood and faced it, we didn’t turn away.”

For some battalion members, the transfer of authority was a time to celebrate. The cooler temperatures of autumn had arrived in the area and the peaceful setting for the TOA was almost surreal. It was amidst this backdrop that Newman stated a painful reminder.

“NMCB-25 and NMCB-18, one thing that is important to you is complacency,” said Newman. It’s easy on a day like today, to become complacent. It’s easy on a day like today to think that all is well. But, let there never be a day that you don’t learn from the day before, and you continue to maintain an edge and you continue to validate the training you had before, and you improve your operations everyday. Well-done

Commodore Robert Newman reminds Seabees of NMCB-25 and NMCB-18 about the need to stay vigilant and to become better through continual learning and by validating training.

NMCB-25. NMCB-18, God bless you and go forward.”

CDR David Marasco, Commanding Officer of NMCB-25, spoke to command representatives following the commodore’s remarks. “I welcome you today to the transfer of authority, a historic milestone in the history of NMCB Two Five,” said Marasco. “Before we came out here, we remember General Zilmer told us that he wanted us to go home tired, and I can tell you that I know you are. You have given everything you could have possibly given and more. You have exceeded every one of my expectations and I am truly proud of your accomplishments.”

The occasion was bittersweet for members of the departing battalion. Three members of NMCB-25 died



Commodore Robert Newman returns a salute from CDR David Marasco during the transfer of authority ceremony in Iraq.



Commodore Robert Newman reminds Seabees of NMCB-25 and NMCB-18 about the need to stay vigilant and to become better through continual learning and by validating training.



Command Master Chief (SCW/FMF) Brian Benzinger removes the NMCB-25 "beep sticker" from the quarterdeck.

while carrying out their missions in Al Anbar Province, Iraq: HM2 (SCW) Jaime Jaenke, EO1 (SCW) Gary Rovinski, and BU1 (SCW) Jerry Tharp.


The same improvised explosive devices that killed these Seabees also seriously injured three additional members of the battalion: BU1 (SCW) Dean Berlin, UT2 Kenny Hendrickson, and EN1 Troy Devault.

"Recognition of your contributions humbles me in such a way that most words cannot describe," said Marasco. "It is a tough task to ask you through our toughest times, when we lost our fellow Seabees; Jerry, Jaime, and Gary, to move forward, but you did that. I'm proud of the things that you have done, and I know that Gary, Jaime and Jerry would be as well - and I dedicate this

deployment in their memory."

"You have been the ultimate leaders of 'Can Do', and I am very proud to have served with you here in Iraq," said Marasco. "NMCB-18, I wish you a safe deployment. I know that you will continue to move forward with your mission in the Can Do tradition. You'll do great work. I know you will. God speed."

Shortly after, Marasco ordered his flag retrieved from the mast. The ceremonial grounds were silent as NMCB-25's flag was slowly lowered and folded for the last time during this deployment. NMCB-18's flag was then raised high, visually signifying the change of authority.

NMCB-25 worked in the same province of Iraq as NMCB-40, and both fell under control of the 9th Naval Construction Regiment. The completion of this deployment is a milestone for the 9th NCR because it is the first time during the global war on terror that a Reserve Seabee regiment relieved an active duty counterpart during Operation Iraq Freedom. 



CDR David Marasco and CDR Dean Gould prepare to cut a cake marking the transfer of authority from NMCB-25 to NMCB-18 in Western Iraq.



The battalion flag for NMCB-25 is slowly lowered during the transfer of authority ceremony.

Seabees Support Marines and Iraqis at Isolated Battle Positions

AI ANBAR PROVINCE, Iraq - Seabees returned this September after months of supporting Marines and Iraqi soldiers at battle positions (BPs) in Western Iraq.

Marines established the battle positions months ago and used the sites to stage operations and house troops. "The BP's allow Marines to move into an area where they can interact with the populace, help protect them, and to bring the fight to the enemy," said CEC (SCW/SW) Dan Delaney, Officer in Charge of this Seabee detachment. "They (Marines) were pretty effective at getting out into the towns, talking to the people and finding out who was there to support the government."

Marines establish a perimeter around the battle positions quickly because force protection is a primary objective. Rapidly built living conditions provided the Marines with protection from indirect fire and weren't improved upon because the Marines next objectives were to train Iraqi soldiers and conduct joint operations in the surrounding area.

The inadequate living conditions of these U.S. Marines and Iraqi soldiers needed addressing, but the solution required another military force entirely.

Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) were tasked with improving the living conditions for these coalition forces by overhauling the battle positions.

"The 3rd Battalion, 6th Marines and the 1st Battalion, Seventh Marines, built them (BPs) as best they could, under the circumstances," said BU1 (SCW) Vincent Del Signore. "But, they needed the Seabees because we had the technical skills, equipment and raw materials to improve these sites."

Seabees have improved the working and living conditions for the Marines since World War II. During this period in history, professionals with vital construction skills were recruited to help win the war. Seabee units today, particularly Seabee Reserve Components, are still composed of older



A flimsy metal ladder serves as the only means to access a rooftop-to-rooftop Marine Corps security position. Seabees replaced temporary access points such as this with fixed structures.



Seabees build a stairway so that Marines can safely access a rooftop security post at a battle position in Iraq.

tradesmen while Marines tend to recruit younger men and women.

Delaney remembered a comment made by a young Marine who spoke briefly with Lt. Col. Marano, Battalion Command, 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. "The young Marine said 'The Seabees are kind of older guys, aren't they?'," said Delaney. "Which goes right back to the Seabees and Marines of World War II. That's what the Marines thought of the Seabees back then also."

"Because the Seabees are older, these Marines were a little skeptical," said Delaney. "The Marines were looking at the heat stress factor and thought they might have to help us instead of the other way around. But, once we got going, the Marines realized we could do the job."

History often repeats itself. Young Marines today, skilled in war fighting like their forefathers, may not be



Before and after photos showing improved rooftop access to a security point for Marines and Iraqi soldiers in the Al Anbar province. Seabees of NMCB-25 stayed at battle positions in Western Iraq to eliminate hazardous working and living conditions for coalition forces.

aware of the shared history of the Marines and Seabees.

“When the Seabees arrived, the junior Marines didn’t even know who we were,” said Del Signore. “They saw Navy on our uniforms and asked what we were doing there. The staff sergeants and gunny sergeants knew who the Seabees were because they had at least seen us at different locations over the years.”

Even some of the Marines who had seen the Seabees didn’t realize their construction potential. “When we first showed up they thought we were there to fix some small things, but when we actually laid out what we were going to do, they were amazed,” said Del Signore.



A Seabee looks out over a nearby city during construction in Iraq. Seabees improved working and living conditions for coalition forces in Western Iraq by completing construction projects at over a dozen battle positions.

Work required at the BP’s ranged from large construction projects to overhauling electrical systems. Common problems included access to running water and accessibility to electricity to powers fans, lights, air conditioning, and in today’s BPs - computers.

A major relief for the Marines and Iraqi soldiers was the installation of air conditioning units where they slept. Over 600 units were installed during the operation. “Life for the Marines up there is basically being a beat cop,” said Del Signore. “If they weren’t eating, sleeping, or manning an observation post around the perimeter, then they’re patrolling the cities on foot.”

“You have to remember - this just was June, July, and August in Iraq - very hot,” said Delsignore. “The Marines go

on foot patrols and they got their first aid kit, tactical vest, side-sapi (small arms protective insert) plates, weapons, spare ammo and lots of water - everything they're going to need out there. They came back and they would be totally drenched with sweat. Then they would go into their berthing space and drop all their equipment and peel off their soaking wet uniform and hang it on the clothesline inside their room."

Seabees wanted to remedy that situation, and they had the material and tools to make a difference, so they constructed clotheslines so that the Marines could dry their uniforms outside.

The battle positions have earned the nicknames "Wild West" and "Fort Apache" for a reason. "Being out there, sometimes you had to find what you could do with what you had in resources - including manpower,"



Above right: An open space is designated as new living quarters for coalition forces.

Center right: Seabees begin construction of an interior frame capable of supporting the weight of sandbags.

Lower right: Marines begin moving in as Seabees complete finishing work. Seabees installed new lighting and air conditioning units for coalition forces at the battle positions.



said Delaney. "We went through the Marines a lot and asked for their help. The command supported as much as they could, but for the most part you are kind of on your own - fending for yourself, improvising, and coming up with stuff that you have just to live out in the field."

Field conditions were just that, and Marines at one BP took showers by standing outside and dumping bottled water over their heads. "We built a little room with two showers and hooked up a running water supply," said Del Signore. "The Marines loved that. We also built two sinks with mirrors for shaving and hooked up a washing machine."

The Seabees worked on a score of battle positions in the area. "We built galleys if they needed them," said Delaney. "All the work the Seabees did was not only for the U.S.





A detachment of Seabees makes its way across Iraq to aid coalition forces at battle positions in the Al Anbar province.

Signore. “One day I saw a guy trying to go up this ladder and I knew we had to take care of that problem - so we built them a new stairway.”

In a similar case, the Marines decided it would be safer if an observation post at the base of the hospital were moved to the roof in order to protect his forces. Two teams of Seabees and Marines went to work immediately. One team built the hardened observation post on the roof while a second team built an exterior stairway. After only three hours the project was complete and the Marines were maintaining a safer watch on top of the hospital.

Seabees worked on another site that was actually damaged by coalition forces. “Insurgents used the building early in the war and the Marines came through and drove them out,” said Del Signore. “Since then, the Marines have occupied the damaged building. People had patched holes in the building with whatever they could find, including cardboard - which was probably the best they could do. We had the skilled labor, tools, and materials so we re-secured the windows, patched up the holes in the walls and rebuilt a lot of the doors so that it was actually weather tight and suitable for air-conditioning.”

“We got every one (BP) done ahead of schedule,” said Delaney. “It was great work, which is what Seabee work is supposed to be - working outside the wire and working right alongside the Marines.”

“Going out to the battle positions and working directly for the Marine infantry was the time where I felt that I was doing the job that Seabees were originally intended to do, which was to go out to the forward areas - to go out to where the

Marines, but for the Iraqi Army that worked right inside the same camps. A lot of times we were working side by side with members of the Iraqi Army.”

Seabees had dozens of stories to tell of how they helped the coalition forces with projects beyond the initial assessment.

In one case, Marines needed to reach an observation post that sat on top of a tall building. They would climb a ladder on one rooftop and move across a void to a taller rooftop. “They were using this rickety ladder, while loaded down with their Kevlar, Outer Tactical Vests, water bottles, weapons, and ammunition,” said Del




A heavy equipment operator from NMCB-25 uses a bulldozer to improve conditions at a coalition battle position. Construction workers from the private sector have received combat training for defensive purposes since the inception of the Seabees during World War II.

Marines were - as close to what you could call the front line in a war that really doesn't have a front - and being able to make the kind of differences that matters to them," said Del Signore.

"It's a lot like what I imagine the guys did in World War II, when the Marines would take an island, set up a couple tents, and the Seabees would roll in and build a whole city for them, said Del Signore. "It really did make me feel like a Seabee."

Del Signore's Dad was in the Marine Corps during the Korean War and his grandfather was in the Marine Corps during World War II. "I had heard stories from them when I was growing up about when they were away in the war. Things wouldn't be very nice where they were and the Seabees would come in and all of a sudden they would have galleys, sleeping quarters, and places to work."

Del Signore said he thought a lot about that when they were at the battle positions. "Maybe someday one of those Marines will tell his kids or grandkids about how he was in Iraq during the war and the Seabees showed up and made things better." 

Seabees Go Hollywood

Usually it is the hard work and dedication of people behind the scenes that make even a modest video or film production possible. Seabees of Naval Mobile Construction Battalion Two Five (NMCB-25) volunteered to work throughout the night to do just that in Iraq. They offered to work out of sight and without credit in order to help the Marines create a training video that could save the lives of coalition forces in the future.

LT Gayles, 916th Marine Air Group, contacted LT Steve Sherman, NMCB-25's training officer, to see if the Seabees would be interested in developing a training video that explored the use of Night Vision Goggles (NVGs) in conjunction with convoy operations in Iraq.

Creating such a video is a little more demanding than one might think. Directors often go to great lengths to capture what appears to be even the simplest shot on film or tape. In this situation, Marines and Seabees had to coordinate the movement of convoy operations, on a military installation, in the middle of the night, in Iraq.

Before shooting could proceed, enough equipment operators, assistant drivers, and vehicles had to be procured to create a small convoy.

When asked, Seabees of NMCB-25 volunteered without hesitation, even though they realized the video would be shot after working hours and throughout the night. EOC (SCW) Joseph Ecker, battalion license examiner, was in charge of helping to coordinate everyone who would be involved.


The video would be shot on a military base in Iraq, but since the equipment operators would be running at night without any lights, ground and air security measures had to be cleared in advance to eliminate any misunderstanding between military teams.

Coordinating military vehicle operations among your own private convoy - while trying to capture staged scenarios on camera is more difficult and time consuming than it sounds. Each night crews had to perform vehicle inspections and procure communications gear well in advance of the first frame being shot.

"We shot from four different positions for each scenario so that we could simulate as closely as possible what you might see during convoy operations," said Ecker. "We coordinated with existing guards at Entry Points (EPs), that we were familiar with, and shot a total of six different scenarios."

The teams worked over two nights to produce over 10 hours of footage. The cameras were outfitted with special lenses so that the final product would reproduce images, as they would actually appear when seen through NVGs. "I've seen the footage and it's what they will see in real life," said Ecker. "We shot just about everything our crews have experienced here in Iraq." With over 200 convoy operations under their belt, the Seabees had more than enough background information to draw from.

"Without the drivers, there would be no video," said Ecker. Some of the Seabees who volunteered for the project were EO1 Jeff Olson, EO2 Dennis Kowalczyk, and EOCN Eric Brown.

Once completed, the video will be used to enhance instructor training for Army and Marine Corps units. "Our convoy crews didn't have a video to help them with NVG familiarization," said Ecker. "Hopefully our troops will come out of the training a little better versed because of this project." 

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